

LIBRARY ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING NOTES

September 1, 2021

Attendees:

Jill Lewis (retired Director of the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, former MCPL Library Board Chair); Francie Gilman (retired Montgomery County librarian, Board of Independence Now); Betty Thompson (AAC consultant); Elizabeth Lang (MCPL Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager); Jonina Duker (member of former Library Advisory Committee Special Needs Library and Disability Resource Center; Debbie Brown (President of the Sligo Creek Chapter National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, staff member at the National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, chair of AAC braille marketing subcommittee); Cindy Buddington (Board of Independence Now, Equipment for Children); Barbara King (member of former Special Needs Library Advisory Committee and former Disability Resource Center Advisory Committee); Jane Carona (Treasurer of American Council of the Blind of Maryland, member of ACB of MD National Capitol Area Chapter and Braille Revival League); Richard Bell-Irving (Treasurer of Learning Disability Association of Montgomery County, Learning Disability Associations of Maryland and Virginia); Tim Lighter (MCPL Library Board liaison); Monica Martinez (formerly director of Partnership for Extraordinary Minds and now special education advocate, involved with parents of people with autism); Yasmin Reyazuddin (member of NFB and of AAC braille marketing subcommittee).

Before the meeting began, Jonina requested that the meeting include closed captioning and instructions for muting to minimize distractions for the whole group. Jane gave instructions: *6 mutes and unmutes on a phone. Jane suggested giving directions for devices at the start of every meeting on how to use the functions they will need and others agreed.

Action: At the beginning of each AAC meeting Jane or another member will provide basic instructions on muting, unmuting and raising and lowering hands. Closed captioning and transcripts are not currently possible with the ACB of Maryland account.

Cindy asked Elizabeth if the library includes a Zoom phone-in option along with meeting IDs and passcodes for all its programs. Elizabeth said that every virtual event does list a “dial in” option with phone number and meeting ID.

Library Report — Elizabeth Lang

All branches are open, there are no more Covid closures. Masks are required, non-negotiable.

This past Spring, she surveyed Books at Home users. There are 107 customers now, and added four more today. Spring survey: 90% using print materials, 4% exclusively audio and 4% exclusively video. The majority rated services as excellent, 10% very good. No fair or poor ratings. Their main challenge was in reaching staff. This was during Covid closure and communication was difficult and confusing. The second difficulty was the US Postal Service, also delays due to Covid. Users expressed concerns about not receiving the materials they wanted; Elizabeth researched and found that it was situations where all the copies were out and so they had to wait for them. It was overwhelmingly positive, there were a lot of “thanks” and “delighted that you’re here” and several personal appreciations for individual librarians, who received public kudos from Elizabeth.

Damascus Library: Francie and Jane have visited. Elizabeth has their feedback and encourages the rest of AAC to go. The Damascus assessment is starting, so they need AAC recommendations. With Covid and distance, travel as a group not feasible right now but for the future she hopes we can return to that. Jill asked could Cindy or someone else in a wheelchair get there? Elizabeth would like all AAC members to go if you can. For those who have not done assessments in the past – visit the branch and see what it’s like and what kinds of recommendations you might have for customers with the disability you represent and in general. Please try to get there by the end of the year and give feedback. MCPL has hired a firm that will begin with a structural assessment and all systems like plumbing and cooling. All exterior ADA work was already done. The facilities assessment will take several months. Design will start in 2022.

Action: By the end of 2021, AAC members visit Damascus and send feedback to Elizabeth about what you would recommend be incorporated in the assessment that will shape the renovation plan.

Germantown renovation update: Waiting for completion of a few final things. They expect re-opening in October.

Maggie Nightingale (Poolesville) closed Aug. 2 for renovation, all preliminary work is done, waiting for award of construction contract. They will not have any staff onsite during that process, and expect a 6-8 months closure.

Potomac: Design is being conducted now, and will be complete by the end of 2021.

Francie asked when does the ADA Compliance office do their inspections? Elizabeth said they are involved in every renovation. The ADA Compliance office has a contract with an ADA specialist firm that produces dozens of pages of detailed reports with a spreadsheet and photos, everything from door thresholds to where the toilet paper is in the bathroom.

Technology: Public use computers at all locations have been upgraded to Windows 10. Windows 10 has a built-in screen reader called Narrator and built-in magnification. Every computer in every location now has accessibility software built into it. Assistive technology workstations were installed 5-6 years ago, one in each branch (except tiny Noyes) including at the Correctional Facility – each assistive tech workstation has a sit-stand table, video magnifier, and computer with JAWS and WindowEyes on it. The old versions of JAWS and Windows Eyes don't work with Windows 10. Elizabeth asked for feedback about her thought to recommend that the library put NVDA on assistive workstations and all workstations (a big improvement in accessibility). NVDA is a free open-source screen reader, increasingly used in Europe more than JAWS.

Jane mentioned that at Damascus staff said the ADA computer didn't get the Windows 10 upgrade. Elizabeth said it's on 90% of computers and will be on all. The County Technology services office is responsible for all the computers, including software purchases and installations. Libraries has a Tech Management office that troubleshoots on a daily basis. The County group gets the money and does the installations. Elizabeth noted that updating JAWS would be \$1700 for 21 locations, based on Freedom Scientific website enterprise pricing. She is having a hard time making the argument to spend that when there are two other free options. Elizabeth will make a recommendation to the director. Yasmin recommended that Elizabeth call Freedom Scientific and see what libraries might be charged, that costs may have come down. Debbie and Jane agreed that NVDA is a reasonable option. Richard said that before looking at the cost, look at the features of NVDA and JAWS. If they are comparable, then there is no need to even look at cost. This

would increase accessibility by bringing accessibility software to all workstations, not only the ADA ones.

Action: Elizabeth will compare NDVA and JAWS features. She will call Freedom Scientific and find out the cost per computer for JAWS upgrade for one computer at each branch.

In the meantime Elizabeth will recommend NDVA for all computers, including laptops that can be carried into private meeting rooms.

Staff Training Update — Elizabeth Lang

We have developed a basic training module on good customer service to customers who have disabilities. A recorded, live session with the Adult Services Forum (no date set yet) will then become available to all library staff in a roll-out whose timing will be set by Kate Tavakolian. The initial panel will have 5 people. A practice session is set for September 14. She has talked with all panel members and discussed what they will cover and ensure roughly consistent content. Elizabeth encouraged each panelist to write their own script so they can practice and be sure to be within 10 minute range about the disability community they represent, what the disability is, what would be most helpful to them coming into the library to pick up holds or use a computer or ask a question at the Information Desk. At the live session, all adult services librarians who are working that day from all libraries will be there; they will hear the presentations and then have Q&A at the end. Elizabeth will host and Kate will facilitate. All participants will have a pre-training assignment, probably to read the tip sheets and watch some podcasts. There will be a post-assignment as well. There will be 90 minutes for presentations, then Q&A, maybe with Chat open all during the event to collect questions, then Q&A. If we can't get to all questions within Chat, we will have a record of unanswered questions. The whole session will be recorded. The Digital Strategies team will help create a video that can be re-used for any adult services staff who missed the forum (on leave, etc.). Kate will decide how to push the recording out to everyone else. There is also standard county-mandated ADA training that all staff will take.

Panel members:

1. Matt Barkley will give overview of what his office does, outline basic expectations at the county level for working with customers with disabilities, basic county resources, how Elizabeth works with his office to address concerns that Elizabeth hears from library staff

2. Nadia, recommended by Richard – cognitive intellectual disabilities
3. Jonina – hidden disabilities
4. Cindy – mobility disabilities
5. Jane – Blindness and visual impairment

There is no staff training day this year.

Kate will be retiring at some point after this panel is done. There will be a lull as we wait for a new Staff Development Specialist but this panel will provide a template.

Richard asked if we could we get copies of the scripts or could we attend the Sept. 14 practice session? Elizabeth said she didn't know if scripts are all actually written. She will ask Kate about attending Sept. 14 but she can at least send the recording.

Action: Elizabeth will ask Kate about attending Sept. 14. She will check about sharing scripts, if they are all written.

Jill noted that future panels are some time away, but we could start looking at next steps. Elizabeth said she will have to see what the incoming person is willing and ready to do.

Braille Marketing Subcommittee Report — Debbie Brown

The children's braille collection is now featured as a collection on the MCPL website, and borrowing of braille is up. Francie checked on the braille books in the catalog and found an inconsistency between the catalog and Elizabeth's earlier list, and Damascus found some other books that may not come up in a catalog search, so we want to work out those inconsistencies and have a complete and accurate list of braille books. Can we then make a flyer about what MCPL has and at what branches and how to request them? Elizabeth said that every library catalog has inaccuracies, so try to market the collection in a way that doesn't include a 100% accurate list. We could say "Here is a sample, books like this, books including..." not "here is a list of all the braille books that the library has for you."

Action: Elizabeth will review the email from the subcommittee. She will find a way to correct the catalog.

Debbie noted that the Louis Braille birthday celebration will have to be held online and that she is unsure of the details at this point.

Elizabeth said that the library is planning to have both in person and virtual events, there are hundreds of events. It is very difficult to do an event both in person and on Zoom, and Tim agreed.

General Outreach and Programming — General discussion

Jill suggested that at our next meeting, let's discuss what our constituents need to know about the library and what they need in order to use the library easily.

Action: Next meeting: In the context of outreach, marketing, and staff training, discuss what our constituents need to know about the library and what they need in order to best use the library, and possibly how staff training fits into that as well.

Elizabeth said that we don't have a director for outreach and marketing yet. We do have a team that does programming. Here is the process AAC members would use:

We generate an idea for a program, identify the speaker(s), plan the program, possible dates, time required (coordinate date and time with Elizabeth). Elizabeth can help us find a branch location physically and/or make arrangements for Zoom.

Nationally known names get taken over by the library and may cost money, which would have to come from an LAC. Yasmin said the Haben Girma program in June was great. It was funded through the Friends of the Library.

Jill suggested focusing on Louis Braille because it takes a long time to get it all organized so it can get out on time. Show the braille games, kids reading braille, etc.

Action: Braille subcommittee should begin to plan for Louis Braille Birthday.

Cindy offered definitions for "general outreach and marketing:" general outreach example: a disability organization puts into their newsletter or social media a brief notice that publicizes what the library can offer to people in their organization. Programming is an event on a topic that offers something that the AAC or an AAC organization thinks that their disability population would like to know e.g., looking

for accessible housing, how to knit, where to go for job information, learning and entertainment, etc.

Yasmin had an accessibility issue when she tried to register for a NorthStar training on computers. The website was not accessible.

Action: Elizabeth asked Yasmin to provide details about the problems she had so she can pass it along to the vendor. MCPL pressures the vendor to find solutions.

They are legally required to make their service accessible. The Library purchase services and programs and tells them when they are not meeting needs properly. MCPL is not the producer of the online material and programs. Vendors can say their product is accessibility to everyone but it's not. Also, many services are single-source vendors, like Kanopy, which has award-winning films that no other service has. If they are not accessible and we have no other source, MCPL has to decide whether to exclude that vendor's products to everyone, or to pressure the vendor to get people to make stuff accessible. Debbie added that publicity needs to say "if you need accommodations or encounter disability-related problems, this is what you do."

Francie suggested that forming a subcommittee can help channel ideas and problems to Elizabeth. Tim said that Board work groups work well, for example the driving force behind getting rid of late fees. Jill said we should invite Amy and other members to consider "how do we reach your group?" Monica April: acceptance month panel, "what do you wish you had known early in your disability experience?" Debbie: aim for about 4 programs a year. Begin somewhere, even just with 2. Francie: some program ideas may come from staff. Encourage that.

Action: Cindy, Francie, Jill will email the AAC to invite those who are interested to meet via Zoom to discuss next steps.

Library Board Report — Tim Lighter

There were no Board meetings all summer. Following the elimination of late fees, Anita brought up idea of no fees for not picking up holds and no fees for losing your library cards. That's official now.

County ADA Compliance Report — Matt Barkley was not present.

Future meetings

The next meeting is December 1. Some people said afternoons are preferable. Debbie asked if we could change the day of the week.

Action: Monica will send out Doodle poll to determine days and times for future meetings.